

Exit Ticket Feedback: Thesis Writing Q & A

#1 Is there a limit to how big a thesis can be?

There is no limit—sometimes a thesis is one sentence, and other times it is two to three sentences long. It just depends on how the writer communicates the argument and focus of the essay.

#2 How specific do questions in a thesis have to be without making the thesis too broad or narrow as a whole?

Remember, a thesis is not a question. If it helps, think of it as an answer to a question. For example:

"Should school begin later in the day for high school students in Airdrie?"

This is not a thesis, because it is a question—you are not asking your reader a question, you are trying to persuade them to think about it the way you do.

vs.

"Airdrie schools should implement a later start time for high school students because it will improve students' learning experiences." ← This is a thesis because it is arguable, focused, has a position, and will discuss ways that it will improve students' learning experiences.

#3 When would be the best time to write a thesis? Because I know there are a lot of starting paragraphs that don't have one.

Great question! You will write your thesis at the end of the introductory paragraph. Most writers will write their thesis **after** they have decided on their topic, know what their argument is, and have an idea of how they are going to support their argument. If you write your thesis last, you might find that your other paragraphs don't support the argument very well. That is why your thesis is considered the controlling idea of your essay.

#4 If the thesis is not argumentative, is it too broad? If not, what is it?

If the thesis is not argumentative, in a persuasive/argumentative essay, it would not be a thesis. "Too broad" means that it is too big of a topic to fit into one essay. For example:

"People need to do more to address the problem of climate change." ← This is too broad because there are so many issues attached to global warming that you wouldn't be able to write about it all in one essay. Are you writing about the (un)seasonal changes in Alberta this year, and what Albertans/policymakers could do about them? Or about the impact that the meat industry has on the

environment, and what people could do to lessen these harmful effects? Focus on just one aspect of global warming and write about it like a grain of sand!

#5 Can a thesis statement be used in everyday life?

Yes! The process of making an argument and backing it up with reasons is used in everyday life all the time! The more that you use strong reasons to support whatever is that you are trying to argue, the better chance you have at getting others to agree with you or at least compromise!

#6 Do the thesis and the hook somehow connect?

Great question! YES, they do connect. You will see this more as we move into your writing for your own essays on your own topic. The hook is going to draw your reader into the thesis—in other words, they are both concerned with your topic. Think about your hook as an introduction to the issue, and then your thesis as a statement of your position on that issue.

#7 What if your essay is comparing two subjects to argue a point?

This would be a compare and contrast essay. We will not be looking at this type of essay this time around, but you will encounter it at some point in high school when you have had plenty of time to practice your writing skills.

#8 Can a thesis be too narrow and too broad or vice versa? Could it be put into two categories?

This is a tough question to answer! I can see how someone might interpret parts of one thesis as being too broad or too narrow. For example:

"Book-banning is a controversial practice." On the one hand, it is broad because it is unclear what is "controversial" about it (and you will find that it is controversial for many reasons, and that there are different settings where books are banned, such as school libraries, classrooms, or public libraries). But on the other hand, it is narrow in the sense that it is just an issue without an opinion—should school boards be able to ban books, or not? Should parents be able to ban books, or not?

The main thing to focus on when you set out to write your own essay to aim for a strong thesis! Make it focused, arguable and based on strong reasons.

#9 When you write a thesis should you have them in paragraphs too?

Your thesis will be written at the end of your introductory paragraph (it will not be a paragraph on its own).

#10 The questions I have is: what is *wordy*? Is there too much words or is it like too broad—you have too much to talk about?

GREAT question! Wordy means that there are too many words used to explain something that could be explained in a more effective, to-the-point manner (kind of like this long wordy sentence here—don't write like this in your essay). It definitely does not mean that you have too much to talk about. It just means that you can say the same ideas using better and fewer word choices. Here's an example:

"The diploma program should be removed in Alberta because it negatively impacts the quality of teaching and learning in high schools in several ways." ← This is an acceptable thesis.

"The diploma program should be removed in Alberta because it does not accurately reflect what students have learned, puts pressure on schools and limits what can be taught during class." ← This is an acceptable thesis that uses the list method.

"The diploma program should be removed in Alberta schools because it is difficult to tell if students actually learned or if they guessed, and there are also students who know the content but who would benefit from demonstrating their knowledge in other ways beyond multiple choice and pen and paper tests. Principals, teachers and school boards also face a lot of pressure to help their students do well on their exams, which can impact how much they focus on other important areas of learning that need to be addressed in their schools. Also, since teachers want their students to do well on this high-stakes exam, some teachers feel like they need to spend their semester prepping their students for the test, which limits the amount of creative and active learning opportunities that they could give their students." ← Wowza, that is a lot of information! Just looking at it you can tell it's too much. You could definitely use some of these reasons in your body paragraphs. But the first two statements are shorter and more effective for prepping your reader for these details that are to come.

#11 Why can't there be just one paragraph and in that paragraph, like, different sentences, about a topic?

Reading and writing an essay is like working through an argument/position to interpret and discuss ideas/information. You need more than one paragraph to be able to work through the argument sufficiently.

#12 I have no questions about thesis writing.

Sweet—if you have any questions later on, please don't hesitate to ask either myself or Ms. Dusevic!

#13 Are there many different types of thesis statements?

Yes, there are different types of thesis statements. It depends on the type of essay that you are writing. We will be working through the persuasive/ argumentative essay. When you get to high school, you will be asked to write a critical/ analytical essay, and you may be asked to write an expository essay (I hope you do—those can be pretty creative if you get to choose your own topic). Please don't think that a "too broad" or "too narrow" statement is a thesis—to be clear, only the strong examples that we have seen so far are actually thesis statements!

#14 Why do we need to do so many steps to learn a thesis statement?

This is such a good question. We are going through all these steps so that you can learn through practice how to write a strong thesis and what not to do. We are going to move into writing the actual essays soon, so I'm hoping to move away from so much direct instruction and more active and creative work time for all of you. I really believe that if I am going to set high expectations for my students, then I better be on the ball and make sure that I am supporting you all as much as I can along the way.

#15 How long does a strong thesis have to be?

Avoid making it too long. That said, if it can't fit in one sentence, that's ok! I would aim for two to (max) three sentences.

#16 Why is a thesis strong even though it's missing points?

If it's still focused, debatable and addresses what the essay will argue without giving the supporting points as a preview then it still achieves the basic criteria of a thesis. Not all writers use the list style. See the first two examples in question #10. Which one do you like better? Try them both if you like!

#17 Why are we focusing so heavily on one sentence out of the whole essay?

Ah, I feel like this is one of the most important questions asked of me today! I know it can feel grueling and repetitive to go over thesis writing so much over the past few classes—after all, some are only one sentence long! But the thesis is the heart of the essay, and without a strong thesis, the entire essay falls apart. Starting any new task requires a lot of teacher direction and 'frontloading' information, but my intention for the rest of this unit is to be able to have all of you gradually direct your own learning through selecting a topic that is personally interesting to you and have short mini-lessons at the beginning of each stage, which will feel more active and student-directed than these past few classes. If you feel like you have thesis writing down-packed and are ready to move on to the next stage, great! That's where we are headed.

#18 Can the thesis statements be a question, or take form of one?

No.

#19 What would be considered a missing point?

Hmm, not sure what you mean by "point" here, so I'm going to take a few guesses. A missing point could be a thesis that doesn't use the list-style (which is okay to do). It could maybe mean that the thesis is missing it's point or argument, as in failing to pass the "so what?" test (which is a red flag that says, "try again!"). Does that answer your question? If not, come see me in person please ☺

#20 How can I learn how to make a good thesis every time?

Practice, practice, practice. You'll have a lot of opportunities to practice in high school.

#21 Why did we have to play speed dating? Isn't there other ways we could have done this??

Ha ha ha okay, fair enough! I really just wanted to have a way for all of you to be active and to work out the ideas amongst yourselves. Students spend a huge portion of their day sitting and listening to teachers go on and on and on. I want to achieve balance in having those necessary, "information frontloading" lecture-y kind of classes with classes that allow for more movement, socialization and construction of knowledge and skills.